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ABSTRACT

A descriptive analysis is presented on the strategy currently being utilized to evaluate the ESEA Title III Human Relations project, "Understanding Ourselves," in the Carroll County Public Schools in Maryland. Building on several theoretical postulates concerning the complex nature of school systems and concerning the organizational and environmental influences and constraints in the area of human relations, the paper focuses on some critical issues pertinent to evaluating programs in this often sensitive area. The relationship between the evaluators and their clients in such program is also examined. (Author/RC)

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A STRATEGY FOR EVALUATING A SYSTEM-WIDE HUMAN RELATIONS PROGRAM

by

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to present and discuss the overall strategy utilized in the evaluation of the E.S.E.A. Title III Human Relations project, Understanding Ourselves, in the Carroll County (Maryland) Public School System. The paper will discuss the demographic and social context of the project, the project development, the theoretical framework for the project and its evaluation, the evaluation design and procedures, and the relationship of the evaluators and the client-system in this often sensitive area.

I. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE PROJECT

Carroll County is located in north-central Maryland. It is bordered by Pennsylvania and by Frederick, Montgomery, Howard and Baltimore counties in Maryland. Westminster, the county seat, is located in the center of the county and is approximately 35 miles northwest of Baltimore City, and 50 miles north of Washington, D.C. (See Figure 1.)

Data from the 1970 census indicate a county population of 69,006. This is an increase of 16,221 residents, or approximately 30.7% since 1960. This growth rate classifies Carroll as one of the most rapidly growing subdivisions in the State of Maryland. The rapid growth during the period 1960-1970 results, for the most part, from outward migration from the Baltimore and Washington metropolitan areas.

The public school population has grown at even a faster rate. In 1960 there were 10,178 students enrolled in the public schools. On September 30, 1970, the student population was 16,627. During this ten-year period (1960-70) the student population grew at a rate of 63.4%. A comparison of this growth rate and the population rate for the county as a whole indicates that the majority of new residents are young families with school-age children. On September 30, 1974, student enrollment had increased to 18,742.

Using current growth patterns, the Carroll County Planning and Zoning Commission has projected a total population of 104,541 by 1980. Assuming commensurate growth in student population, the public schools in the county should serve 25,403 students by 1980.

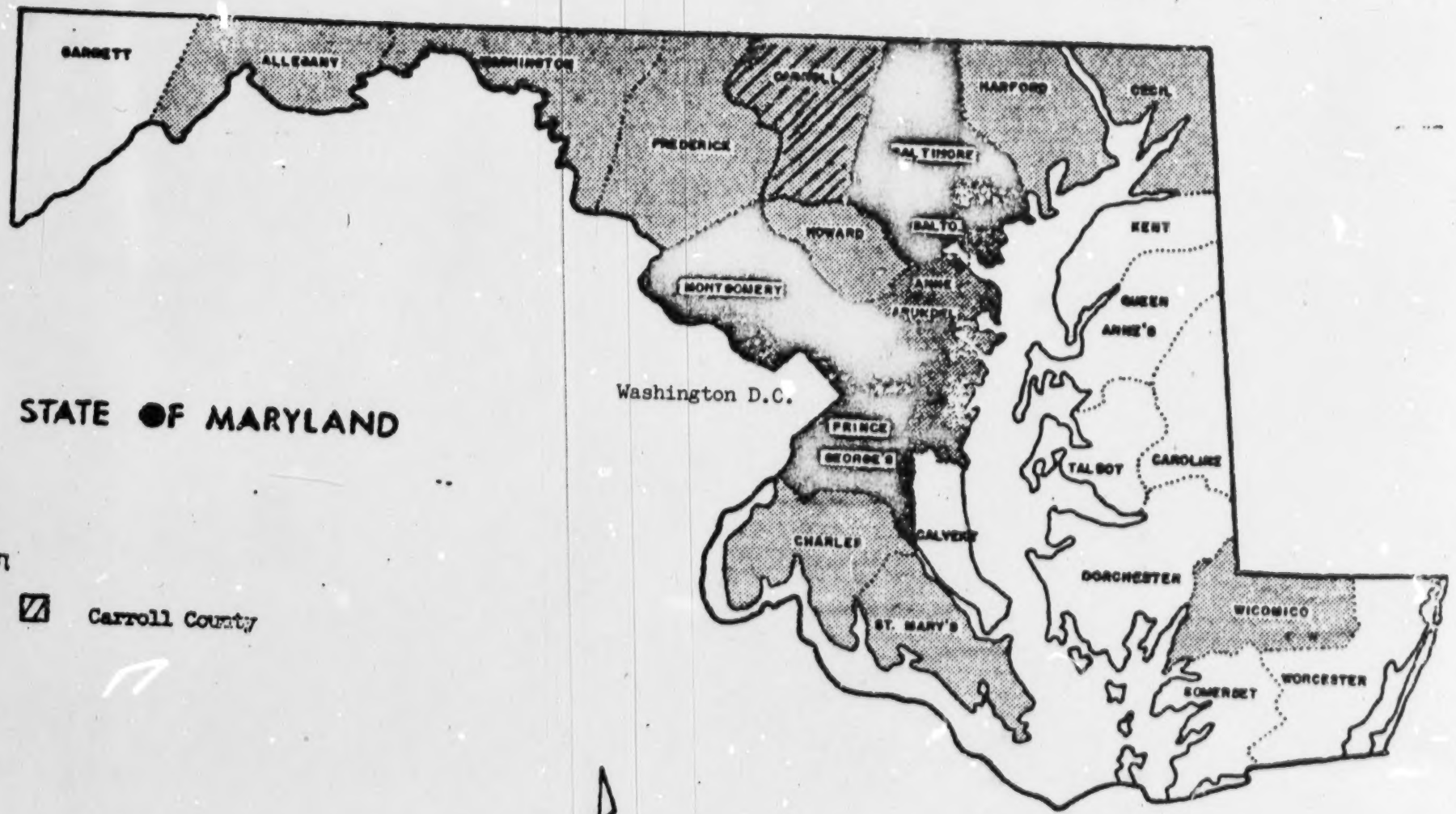
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Figure 1

These estimates are based on current growth rates and do not provide for significant migrational increases which, because of the proximity to Baltimore and Washington, might logically be anticipated.

Current estimates are that 15% of the total population should be classified as "Rural-Farm", 52% as "Rural-Non-Farm", 23% as "Other Urban", and 10% as "Urban". Approximately 75% of the available land in Carroll County is devoted to agricultural and conservation purposes. Some light industry has recently begun to locate within the county and employment within the county in pursuits not related to agriculture has expanded. Agriculture will probably remain the dominant economic force in the county for the foreseeable future. However, increasing numbers of county residents will be engaged in non-agricultural employment within the county, as well as in commuting to the metropolitan areas of Baltimore and Washington for work in trade and industry.

The 1970 census indicated that the non-white population of Carroll County was 2,879, or 4.1% of the total county population. This compares to a state percentage of non-white residents of 18.6% and a Baltimore Region percentage of 24.2%. For the ten-year period 1960-70, there has been no appreciable net immigration of non-whites into Carroll County. As a consequence of the predominantly white migration to the suburbs in the Baltimore Region, a slightly larger proportion of the County's population was white in 1970 as compared to 1960.

Because of population patterns within the county, black students tend to be concentrated in a few areas. The range of percent of black students in Carroll County Public Schools is from

0 to 12.5%. Six schools have a percentage of black students of 10% or more. Six schools as of September 1974 had no black students.

In the 1972-73 school year, the black professional staff comprised 1.9% of the total county professional staff. There are a number of schools with no black teachers or administrators.

With the increase of the white portion of Carroll County's population has come new ideas and a somewhat more rigid outlook toward minority groups and their problems. This fact coupled with the area's traditional conservatism have led to confrontations between whites and non-whites both in communities and in the schools. It was decided that one way to help to defuse these confrontations was to have an ongoing program in Human Relations for Grades K-12 in the Carroll County schools and to involve the entire Carroll County community in the project.

During the 1972-73 school year, the most recent year for which information is available, the per student cost of education in Carroll County was $948.57 compared to a State average of $1,058.04. Carroll County ranked 11th of 24 school systems in the state.

During the late 1960's and into the '70's, the Carroll County Public Schools noted increasing evidence of conflict, misunderstanding, misinformation and distrust among students, teachers, administrators and citizens. Although overt hostility and confrontation focused on conflicts between blacks and whites, these sometimes dramatic tensions were symptomatic of deeper, more

pervasive ideological differences and suggested that a basic problem in human relations and human understanding existed.

Tensions reached open conflict proportions during the summer of 1972. Each day that passed saw some become more apathetic and others become more militant. There was growing lack of confidence in the school system's ability to provide a quality education for all children. Crosses were burned on school playgrounds. There were "sit-ins", fights, and irresponsible demands from both sides. There was growing evidence that the following school year would be characterized by disruption, bitterness and recrimination.

Against this background, a biracial team composed of students, teachers, parents, administrators and concerned citizens began to meet to explore ways to achieve mutual understanding and trust. The team identified two problems for immediate attention. First, a vehicle for improving communication between and among all elements of the school community had to be developed. The communications network had to have high visability and credibility and had to afford opportunities for all segments of the population to put ideas in and to retrieve accurate information relative to their individual concerns.

The second problem concerned the pervasive nature of human relations difficulties. The team recognized that while human relations is often over-simplified to mean race relations, it is generally agreed that race relations is only a part, albeit an extremely important part, of the broader concept of human relations.

The racial conflicts which then plagued the system were just one manifestation of the human understanding problem. Future overt conflicts might take the form of religious group conflicts, sex-role conflicts, rural-suburban conflicts or may in fact disrupt school activities in more subtle fashions.

Therefore, any attempt to make the current state of affairs more tolerable for all had to be directed at the roots of the problem, thereby lessening the probability of future human relations tensions. A narrow "ad hoc" approach, suggesting simple solutions to superficial problems,had to be avoided. While racial problems were the immediate concern and deserved high priority, the larger context in which they occurred and the many ramifications of the functioning of the public schools in the current political and social systems required exploration.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The original team of concerned individuals evolved into a "Design Team" whose purpose was to develop a comprehensive program which might treat both short range (communications network) and long range (changing affective behaviors) problems.

Goals and objectives were identified for each target population: students, staff and the community. A plan for provision of interventions in a limited number of schools each year for three successive years was developed. Most importantly, a philosophy was developed which emphasized that human relations is not something to be imposed on the target populations, rather it is a set of

affective behaviors which evolve from opportunities to develop awareness and appreciation of the contributions and basic dignity of all ethnic, religious, social, and economic groups which comprised Carroll County and the larger society. The following postulates formed the essence of the developing philosophy: 1) School personnel have the obligation and the resources required to promote a program in intergroup relations; 2) The Central Staff must continue to give status and priority to the program and must actively solicit the support of the Board of Education and influential community leaders; 3) The School administrators should be aware of possible areas of intergroup tensions and reactions, and must provide for positive interaction among all racial, ethnic and religious groups in their schools; and 4) Teachers must manage classroom activities so that they promote a democratic climate and a humanistic approach to the learning situation.

The design strategy dictated that effective interventions had to be directed at individual schools; and in fact, should result from the recognition of needs and problems by the students, staff, and community served by those schools.

Beginning with a small corps of teachers and administrators, specific inservice training was provided in order to help the staff develop as leaders capable of carrying on inservice education and related activities in their own schools. This group was slowly expanded through additional workshops and seminars until a human relations committee of eight to ten persons had been developed

in each school. The committees designed laboratory activities on topics such as communications skills, the teacher and race relations, the authentic self, values clarification, and growth activities.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROJECT AND ITS EVALUATION

The working assumption, then, was that this project was fundamentally concerned with affective behaviors, demonstrating an awareness and appreciation of the manifest values, beliefs, and behavior modes of all ethnic, racial, social, religious, and economic groups in the local community and the larger social ambiance. In this sense, the project and its continuing evaluation were primarily concerned with the development of positive attitudes. This fact, coupled with the notion that the problem was perceived as an ideological problem and the recognition that the intended behaviors would take place in an organizational setting indicated the need to state some basic premises, within which the evaluation process ought to take place:

1. Premises concerning the learning-teaching process in the area of attitude development:
   a. First, it was assumed that learning involves a change in behavior. If there is no change, there is no learning. The general framework for the measurement of outcomes must be something like this: What does the learner do that he couldn't or didn't do before the learning experience?

b. Second, cognitive achievement will not necessarily lead to the development of affective achievement. One may know all there is to know about the dynamics of sound human relations, yet not wish to demonstrate those principles in his own behavior.

c. Third, it was assumed that attitude development is a process of the internalization of specific objectives arranged in hierarchical fashion, from the most simple (awareness) to the most complex (characterization by a particular attitude). (2)

d. Fourth, children and young adults develop attitudes not by direct exhortatory teaching methods or appeals to conscience through proverbs, rules, and regulations. Rather, they develop attitudes by modeling and imitation and by working through a process of attitude development. (6)

e. Fifth, a curriculum focusing on affective development must recognize that the individual learner's concerns (e.g., connectedness, self-identity, and potency) are interwoven in all learning activities (e.g., awareness, abstract thought, and conscious action). (6)

2. Premises concerning ideological systems:

a. Ideological systems are best conceived as two-dimensional: there is content and there is structure. The content of the ideological system is what individuals believe or value. Values and beliefs, by their very nature, are

relative and derive from the idiosyncratic nature of the individual's experience, family background, ethnic culture, religious training, education, etc. The structure, or belief-disbelief dimension, of the ideological system determines the manner in which individuals receive, evaluate, and act upon relevant information received from outside their own value system on its own merits. Thus, the former dimension is what individuals believe to be the fundamental values and the latter is the way they determine those values. A complete understanding of the individual's ideological system would include the measurement and analysis of both content and structure.

b. Human relations problems stemming from ideological conflicts are not due to the existence of conflicting value systems, but rather they are due to an ideological belief-disbelief system unable to tolerate those conflicting values. Belief-disbelief systems can be differentiated along a continuum of closed to open, regardless of the individual's value system. A closed or dogmatic belief-disbelief system is demonstrated by a closed thought mode, an authoritarian outlook on life, an intolerance of those with opposing views, and an overtolerance of those with similar views. A major symptom of a closed belief-disbelief system is prejudice, an initial intolerance of those possessing or manifesting different ethnic, religious, or socio-economic values, customs, or beliefs. Another symptom is ethnocentrism, an overtolerance

of those possessing values, customs, and beliefs similar to one's own. (4)

c. Value systems differ from individual to individual. They are usually instilled at birth and during early childhood. They are arbitrary, most often, and usually result from a choice among options or are inherent in the racial, ethnic, religious and economic culture of the individual. In a pluralistic society like our own, to expect consensus on value systems is foolhardy. Of course, there is and must be consensus on remote or sacred values like "the dream of brotherhood", "equality of opportunity", "world peace", etc. However, these remote and ill-defined values have little direct effect on one's minute-to-minute living and decision making. It is the secular or "down-to-earth" values that have more of an impact on one's daily living. These secular values are usually based on one's ethnic heritage, religious beliefs, family customs, etc. The existence of diverse value systems has been considered functional to a culturally rich pluralistic society. The school's function, then, in shaping ideologies and eliminating ideological conflicts centers on the belief-disbelief dimension, that is, the structure. To eliminate human relations problems, it must arrange learning conditions that will enhance the development of open belief-disbelief systems.

3. Premises concerning the organizational setting:

Social behavior in the organization can best be conceived as a function of the structural dimension (nomothetic) and the personal dimension (idiographic) of the organization. While the individual's belief-disbelief system, a personality factor, will be of major importance in determining his relationship with noncongruent value systems, the organizational setting (that is, its climate) will also be a major factor. Climate is to the organization what personality is to the individual. And because students, teachers, and administrators function within the framework of an organization (the school), the climate of the school is most important for their relationships. The school climate can be differentiated along a continuum of closed to open and this differentiation will be a major influence or constraint on the establishment of sound human relations within the school. The factors defining differentiated school climates are: disengagement; hindrance; esprit; intimacy; aloofness; production emphasis; thrust; and consideration. The climate types are: open; autonomous; controlled; familiar; paternal; and closed. (1)

IV. PROJECT EVALUATION DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

General Rationale for Evaluation:

The nature, scope, and objectives of this project required an evaluation design that would be cyclic and continual, rather than

linear and terminal. The general purpose of the evaluation was to provide the Project Design Team timely, target-related, succinct, statistical and anecdotal, quantitative and qualitative information.

Based on the information provided, the Design Team would have the logical and empirical evidence to understand the beginning conditions and characteristics of the target schools and their clients, the success of the program as it progressed, and the effectiveness of the total project, once it was completed. In addition, continual input from the evaluators would allow the Design Team to plan appropriate inservice sessions as the project progressed and redefine strategies for development of learning conditions which enhance "open" belief systems.

Overview of Evaluation Function:

The purpose of the evaluation, then, was to provide the Project Design Team with information which would be incorporated into their decision-making activity. The task of systematic evaluation involved primarily the collection, organization, analysis, and reporting of relevant data. The criteria of validity, reliability, timeliness, pervasiveness, and credibility were used to assess the adequacy of evaluations as they took place. (5) Based on these criteria, the evaluation process itself, once initiated, was modified from time to time. This called for continuing interaction between the Project Design Team and the Evaluators.

Evaluation activities focused on three target-groups within each school: 1) students; 2) teachers and administrators; and 3) the community. While the targets of evaluation assessments were clear, a great deal of attention had been given to what

evaluation model might best be used to accomplish the purposes of the project. Given the nature of the project and the continuing information yield and feedback that was obviously desirable, it seemed to be appropriate to adopt a four-phase model, The Context-Input-Process-Product Evaluation Model, developed by Daniel L. Stufflebeam. (5) The descriptions which follow will indicate how the process was used as an evaluation approach in this particular instance.

Evaluation Strategies:

Orientation Sessions. Soon before the evaluation process began, the evaluators met with the staffs of each of the schools to explain and discuss the rationale, objectives, procedures, etc. of the evaluation activities. Likewise, an initial meeting between the evaluators and the Project Design Team occurred. This initial meeting was followed by periodic meetings at mutually set times and dates. These meetings between evaluators and the Project Design Team were viewed as essential and integral to sound continual evaluation procedures.

Context Evaluation. The purpose of this phase of the evaluation was to assess as accurately as possible the pre-program stage or situation of each of the target groups in each of the schools.

In addition to collecting demographic data on racial, ethnic, religious and economic structures, information on occurrences of conflicts demonstrative of poor human relations attitudes was gathered. This information was systematically collected from County

and School System records and reports, as well as from personal interviews with each of the school principals involved.

In addition to these activities, the following assessments were made:

a. Student Target Group:

The Primo-Rapp Affective Evaluation Scale was administered to a randomly selected sample of students from each of the target schools and each of the grade levels. The purpose of this assessment was to determine self concept of students as well as positive and negative attitudes toward teachers with whom they interacted.

b. Professional Target Groups (Teachers and Administrators):

The Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ) was administered to all school faculties. In addition, the Dogmatism Scale (D-Scale) was administered to all administrators and a 25% random sample of teachers in these schools.

c. Community Target Group:

An Educational Objectives Survey was administered to a sample of the parents in each of the schools. The purpose of the survey was to determine the weighted importance of school objectives pertaining to the development of sound human relations as compared to other school objectives.

Input Evaluation. These evaluations included a critical examination of materials, teaching methods, modes, media, etc. in the light of the criteria established by the project objectives of the proposal, and in the light of the premises established for the teaching-learning process in the area of attitude development.

Assessments and evaluations were made by not only examining materials, but by interviews with teachers, supervisors and administrators. This set of evaluations focused on the resources that were being used to achieve program objectives. The following criteria were used in evaluation activities (Examples of specific questions to be asked accompany each of the criteria): (3)

a. Cultural Pluralism

Is there an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of a variety of acceptable life-styles?

b. Mutual Respect

In illustrations and photographs and films, is there an indication of the equal status of social groups, ethnic groups, men and women?

c. Individual Contributions

Is there an emphasis that every group has its list of leaders, thinkers, moralists, writers, artists, scientists, builders, and other contributors to society?

d. Equal Worthiness

Is there adequate reference to the problems of the poor, minorities, and foreigners objectively and without condescension.

e. Historical Disadvantage

Is there a portrayal of historical and contemporary figures on the basis of accuracy or openly admitted value judgments, rather than on the basis of myth or hidden value judgments?

f. Contemporary Conditions

Is there a manifestation of opposition to racism, sexism, etc.?

g. Role of Conflict

Is there candid treatment without rationalizing, distorting, or ignoring unresolved intercultural problems, including those which involve prejudice and discrimination?

h. Individual Responsibility

Is there a relating of knowledge and issues to the immediate life-space of the learner?

A random selection of 27 classes was made and through a systematic examination of materials, modes, and media focusing on the criteria mentioned above, the input evaluation was accomplished.

Process Evaluation. Process evaluation activities involved a continual assessment of activities programmed to meet objectives as stated for students, teachers, administrators, and the community. The criteria established by the Project Design Team as characteristic of an organization possessing good human relations were used in the evaluation of activities. Continued feedback concerning accomplishments was presented to the Project Design Team by the evaluators. The Design Team, in turn, utilized this feedback to modify objectives as well as interventions.

Product Evaluation. These evaluation activities comprised the post-assessment. Evaluation activities performed in the Context evaluation were systematically repeated. The purpose of these evaluations was to assess the overall effectiveness of the project for all target groups in each of the schools. These results would provide further input for the implementation of the project in other schools during the ensuing year.

The rationale, design, and strategies outlined in this paper indicate the formal evaluation activities. They constitute the core of the assessment and evaluation of the Human Relations project. It should be reiterated, however, that there was constant and continual interaction between the Project Design Team, the school clientele and the evaluators. The evaluators perceived the project as a cooperative venture by all those directly or indirectly involved. The nature of the project and the evaluation format called for much communication between the submission of formal evaluation reports.

V. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The overall strategy, the Context-Input-Process-Product model, utilized for this project has proven to be successful both for project evaluators and project managers. This basic strategy, because of its cyclic nature, has yielded useful and timely data and has well serviced the central office staff, the project managers, the school principals, the project facilitators, the teachers, and the support personnel.

However, it is important to point out that the implementation of the model with the provision of timely quantitative and anecdotal data was not the only factor in the success of the evaluation. On the contrary, particularly in the early stages of the evaluation process, the evaluation model used met with some resistance from project participants, particularly at the school building level. Many teachers and some principals had difficulty understanding the rationale for the collection of certain context evaluation information, particularly issues pertaining to organizational climate and

individual dogmatism. This resistance, coupled with the imposition of a new mode of evaluation thinking (cyclic as opposed to linear or experimental) executed by outside urban-oriented evaluators caused less than full cooperation by the building professional staff of this rural and conservative school system. Because the major objective of the project was the development of sound human relations, the sensitivity of the relationship between the evaluators and the professional staff was considered of high priority. In addition, because the evaluators were invited in by a central office staff highly supportive of the project, there was a natural tendency to perceive the evaluators as "central office people". Within this complex inter-organizational context, the credibility of the evaluators was sometimes subtly and even overtly challenged. In short, before the evaluation strategy could be sold, the role of the evaluators had to be legitimized by the target population, particularly the teachers and building administrators. To accomplish this task, the evaluators had to spend a great amount of time and energy building a rapport and establishing credibility with the project participants. At times, the planned technological strategies and tactics for evaluation had to be modified or eliminated for this cause. The choice between strict adherence to the collection of valid and reliable information at the expense of project participant alienation was not infrequent. The evaluators made those choices after weighing all alternatives in terms of costs and benefits. At times, evaluation technology was traded-off in order to alleviate the perception of threat by participants, however irrational and

ill-founded these perceptions were. At times, the evaluators had to tolerate some alienation for the sake of preserving the essential validity of the evaluation design. Those decisions involving conflicts between the technology of the evaluation system and the needs-dispositions of the clients were the most precarious, but were at the crux of the success or failure of the evaluation process. There was often only a shade of evidence directing the evaluators to one choice as opposed to another. The simple rules of compromise or consensus were not appropriate technologically nor were they operational in this particular social-political context. In short, the evaluators often had to make decisions between the system, that is, the evaluation system, and the persons being subjected to that system. In this particular case, the style of the evaluators had to become transactional, sometimes serving as advocate of the evaluation system at the expense of the individual and sometimes serving as advocate of the individual at the expense of the planned evaluation procedures. The professional guilt of abandoning the technology of evaluation often competed with the human guilt of sacrificing the feelings and perceived rights of the individuals. This became the apparent dilemma of the evaluators of this project and is probably the dilemma of many other evaluators who possess a professional responsibility to developed and proven technologies while possessing a personal responsibility to respect the feelings and perceptions of fellow human beings, however distinct these perceptions may be from their own.

These particular experiences have led the evaluators of this project to appreciate the value of an evaluation model that is conceptually and technologically sound. There is ample evidence that an evaluation strategy, like CIPP, can provide the framework for a most useful set of techniques and tools to gather information for valid and timely decision-making. These experiences have also made very clear that the personhoods of the evaluators and the personhoods of those in the client-system are integral parts of the whole evaluation "experience". Once again, the complementary impact of man and mechanism became valid and inescapable.

At the present time the implementation and evaluation of the project continues. What was once a vision of a more open school system both organizationally and individually, begins to take on a reality, although a modified reality. What was once an evaluation strategy conceived on a drawing board is alive and operating, but it is a somewhat modified reality as well. Both the project designers and the evaluation system inventors have shaped some organizational and human behavior. But, in the process, their plans and behaviors have been shaped as well. The encounter of good intentions and air-tight strategies for evaluating those good intentions with unpredictable, somewhat mysterious, but always challenging human behavior, has brought about a satisficing reality, not perfect, but the best possible within the constraints and influences of the situation.

It is a classical example of Aristolelean logic and Freudian logic in interaction. It is that meshing of what "ought to be" with what "is". From an evaluation point of view, it is the only reality

that is operational and the only reality that is attainable. In this case, the so-called "healthy web of tension" between men, systems, and technologies has been productive both for the project's objectives and the objectives of the evaluators.

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